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AUSTRALIA

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AUSTRALIA

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Welcome Serbia

FFA Chairman Frank Lowy AC

Welcome to the Qantas Socceroos international friendly match against Serbia here at Etihad Stadium.

In particular, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to our friends from Serbia who are making their first official visit to Australia. I hope you enjoy your stay and our hospitality whilst you are here in our country.

This is only the second time that our two nations have officially met on the football field.

I had the pleasure of attending our first ever meeting at the Mbombela Stadium in Nelspruit, South Africa for our final group match of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

Although both teams went into the match with a very slim of chance of qualifying for the knock-out phase of the tournament, the atmosphere and intensity of the match was electric, enthralling fans from both sides.

Fortunately the Qantas Socceroos were 2-1 winners on the night, but both teams could be proud that they had produced a performance worthy of a final and created a new friendship and rivalry as a result.

Even though the 2010 FIFA World Cup is still in our recent memory, much has happened to the Qantas Socceroos in the past year. The biggest change is the appointment of our new Qantas Socceroos Head Coach, Holger Osieck. Since Holger has been in charge of the team, we have seen much success already including our AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2011 campaign where we made the final only to be narrowly beaten by Japan and the most recent 2-1 victory over Germany in Monchengladbach.

We look forward to further success under Holger's management of the Qantas Socceroos.

I would like to thank all our partners for their ongoing support and especially to the Victorian Premier Ted Baillieu and his Government for their contribution to hosting tonight's match.

My best wishes to both teams for what I am sure will be a competitive and enjoyable match for all and also all the best for both teams as they embark on their respective campaigns to qualify for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil.

Frank Lowy AC
CHAIRMAN
FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

> "This is only the second time that our two nations have officially met on the football field"

FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

Welcome to Melbourne

Victorian Premier Ted Baillieu

It is a pleasure to welcome fans and players to Etihad Stadium for this highly anticipated match between the Qantas Socceroos and Serbia.

Last year, the two teams met for the first time at the FIFA World Cup in what was a crucial final group match for both teams. The Qantas Socceroos defeated Serbia 2-1 and tonight we will see the Serbian team intent on squaring the ledger.

Major sporting events, such as international football matches, are a great opportunity to showcase Melbourne as Australia's major events capital, and promote our world-class sporting venues.

Watching these elite athletes in action can inspire us all to visit our local parks, enjoy a kick of the football or join a sporting club. Major sporting events can often provide a boost to sports participation at a grassroots level. Our Government is proud to work in partnership with Football Federation Australia to ensure that the benefits of international matches, such as this one, filter down to local football clubs and communities.

Our Government is also investing in a community benefit package to be delivered through Football Federation Victoria. This will build on an existing grassroots program that seeks to increase support for volunteers and increase coaching and officiating opportunities.

For football players at every level and fans of the game, there is a lot to look forward to both at tonight's match, and also in terms of the future of this sport in Victoria.

I encourage our interstate and overseas guests to enjoy a taste of Melbourne's renowned sporting culture and entertainment districts, such as Southbank and the Docklands precinct, as well as the vibrant atmosphere that Victoria has to offer.

I hope that you all enjoy what promises to be an exciting game, and I wish both sides the best of luck.

Ted Baillieu
PREMIER OF VICTORIA

> "International football matches are a great opportunity to showcase Melbourne as Australia's major events capital"

Tough test for my boys

Holger Osieck Head Coach Qantas Socceroos

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls and welcome to Etihad Stadium here in Melbourne for our match against Serbia.

As a coach it is always great to test yourself against strong opposition and tonight's opponent is a great example of that.

Brimming with talent, Serbia is one of the strongest footballing nations in Europe and are currently in the process of qualifying for Euro 2012.

Australians will still remember the quality of Serbia from their games at the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Despite our 2-1 victory against Serbia in South Africa, which this is history anyway, I am convinced it will be a different game tonight.

In terms of our squad, I am very glad to have the players back in camp once again since our last match against Germany in March. Although some players are unavailable for selection, there is now an opportunity for other players to step-up and justify their nomination for the Qantas Socceroos team.

Our next goal is to qualify for the 2014 FIFA World Cup with our first qualification matches to be played in September. So as you can see, that date is not very far away and every minute that we can spend together, on the training field or playing quality matches, is extremely valuable at this time of our preparation.

In closing I would like to thank you our fans for your continuous support of the Qantas Socceroos and we hope to do you proud tonight.

I hope you all enjoy the match.

Holger Osieck

HEAD COACH
QANTAS SOCCEROOS

> "Brimming with talent Serbia is one of the strongest footballing nations in Europe"

ON THE BALL

A quick round-up of the latest happenings in Aussie football

Westfield Matildas gear up for Germany

The Westfield Matildas head to the Gold Coast this month to round out their preparations for the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup to be held in Germany later this month.

The training camp will be a final chance for many players to press their claims for a squad berth before the reigning AFC Asian Cup champions fly to Germany on June 14.

Once in Germany, the Westfield Matildas will play two behind closed-door preparatory games against England and Mexico.

At the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup Australia take on Brazil in their opening group match before clashes against Norway and Equatorial Guinea.

TheWestfield Matildas' final game on home soil was last month's 2-1 friendly victory over New Zealand in front of a healthy crowd of 2,866 at Bluetongue Stadium on the Central Coast. Coach Tom Sermanni's side maintained their 17-year unbeaten streak against New Zealand, and took the early advantage through a Catherine Cannuli header.

The lead was to be short-lived, however, as the Football Ferns leveled matters midway through the first half courtesy of a Hannah Wilkinson tap-in.

But skilful Collette McCallum's ninth international goal from a trademark free-kick on the edge of the penalty box just after halftime gave the Westfield Matildas a lead that they would hold for the remainder of the game.

*See a full report on the Westfield Matildas on page 44 of this issue.

WESTFIELD MATILDAS WORLD CUP COVERAGE

You can watch the Matildas on free-to-air TV later this month. Westfield Matildas v Brazil: **1.45am** (AEST), Wednesday June 29, SBS ONE. Westfield Matildas v Equatorial Guinea: **9.30pm** (AEST), Sunday July 3, SBS TWO.Westfield Matildas v Norway: **2am** (AEST), Wednesday July 6, SBS ONE

And for those who want to read more on the Matildas, our girls have made history. For the first time in FourFourTwo history anywhere in the world, a female footballer graces the front cover. Pele, Maradona, Cantona, Beckham... now it's Kerr, Barbieri and Simon.

"I used to think being in the same magazine as ones with Beckham on the front cover was pretty special. Now I'm on the front cover," says Matildas skipper Melissa Barbieri with a laugh. FourFourTwo Australia magazine,with the Westfield Matildas on the cover is out now.

And also check out Girls FC on Facebook.

Qantas Joeys' tough task

The Qantas Joeys have been drawn in Group F alongside Côte d'Ivoire, Brazil and Denmark for the 2011 FIFA U-17 World Cup Mexico, which will be played from June 18 to July 10.

Following the draw, Qantas Joeys Head Coach Jan Versleijen's (pictured above) first impression was that his team has a challenging but not impossible draw.

"If you compare the Joeys draw to the Young Socceroos draw, there is more variation in the strength of the U-17 groups compared to the U-20 groups," said Versleijen. "We know about the Denmark team who are historically well-organised. The Ivorians are a little bit of an unknown, but have a hybrid African/ European style of play with plenty of strength and ability.

"Of course, the Brazilian style of play is very well known and this will be an important match for us in the group stage.

"The advantage that we have going into the tournament is that the majority of our squad is based at the Australian Institute of Sport and the players are very familiar with each other.

"Again our goal will be to progress from the group phase into the knock-out phase and then beyond," concluded Versleijen.

The Qantas Joeys travel to Mexico in early June for a pre-tournament camp in Pachuca, before moving to their base camp in the city of Guadalajara, during the first phase of the tournament.

The Qantas Joeys will play their first match of the tournament against Côte d'Ivoire on Monday June 20, then face Brazil on Thursday June 23, before their final group match against Denmark on Sunday June 26.

The Qantas Joeys will be playing Côte d'Ivoire and Brazil in Guadalajara on an artificial grass field, with the final group match against Denmark on a grass pitch in Queretaro..

The Qantas Joeys qualified for the FIFA U-17 World Cup having made the semi-final of the AFC U-16 Youth Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan last year. Their matches, the Semis and Final of the FIFA U-17 World Cup Mexico 2011 will be broadcast live on SBS TV.

GIVE SMOKING A RED CARD

Smoking kills more than 15,000 Australians each year and is a leading cause of cancer, heart disease, stroke and emphysema. Most of us know of the dangers of smoking, but there are still nearly 2.9 million Australians aged over 14 years who smoke every day.

The Australian govt is committed to reducing smoking rates and helping Australians to improve their health. The new 'National Tobacco Campaign' is the biggest-ever national campaign of its kind and encourages smokers to quit now.

To help promote the quitting message to football fans across the nation, the 'National Tobacco Campaign' is pleased to announce its association with FFA. Quitting successfully may take a number of attempts.

Advice is available to help smokers quit. Visit www.australia.gov.au/quitnow or call the Quitline on 137 848 for more information.

So why not give smoking a 'red card' this season and kick the habit for good.

Cottees 5-a-Side Football

Cottee's Schools 5-A-Side has kicked off again for 2011 and Hyundai A-League players are currently travelling to clinics around Australia to help Cottee's spread football fun to schoolkids everywhere!

Most recently the Cottee's Schools 5-A-Side Football program visited lucky schools in Doncaster East, Victoria, taking along Melbourne Victory players Carlos Hernandez and Petar Franjic to welcome students and assist with skills and games.

Newcastle Jets' midfielder Jobe Wheelhouse and defender Nikolai Topor-Stanley also recently attended a NSW event in Lake Macquarie which hosted more than 200 primary school kids.

Teams like the 'Apple Raspberry Aliens' and 'Coola Crazies' are pitted against each other to add an extra bit of interest for participants – letting them match up with their favourite cordial flavours.

Having been involved in Australian families' lives for generations, the Cottee's Schools 5-A-side program aims to bring together fun, active participation and football in a day that also gets the kids out of their normal school environment.

And for an extra treat, participants get to take home a showbag full of football goodies!

It's all about getting kids and their families involved in the game of football and encouraging healthy fun-filled lifestyles.

COTTEES CONTACTS

If you'd like to get involved or know someone who would, contact the relevant person below from your state:

Key contacts
South Australia - Football Federation SA, Ph: (08) 8354 1003, info@ffsa.com.au

Victoria - Football Federation Victoria, Ph: (03) 9474 1800, info@footballfedvic.com.au

To find out more about the Cottee's Schools 5-a-side program and how to register your school, visit cottees.com.au/football

QANTAS YOUNG SOCCEROOS READY FOR COLOMBIA

Qantas Young Socceroos Head Coach Jan Versleijen selected a mixture of Australian-based and overseas-based players in his 23-player squad for a European training camp from 23 May to 6 June 2011. During the tour the Qantas Young Socceroos were based in the Netherlands and played a friendly match against the German U-19 National team in Kamen-Kaiserau. They also competed at the Terborg Tournament.

This camp was last chance for the players to bid for a place in the final squad that will compete at the FIFA U-20 World Cup which will be held in Colombia from 29 July to 20 August. Meanwhile the Qantas Olyroos will face Yemen on the 19th and 23rd June 2011 with the venues to be confirmed by the AFC shortly.

Pararoos in action

The Australian Paralympic 7-A-Side football team, 'The Pararoos', have been drawn alongside Brazil, Netherlands and Spain in Group A of the 2011 Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association (CPISRA) Football 7-A-Side World Championships which will be held in the Province of Drenthe, Netherlands from June 17 to July 1, 2011.

The CPISRA Football 7-a-Side World Championships will serve as the qualifiers for the 2012 London Paralympic Games, with the top seven teams progressing to the final tournament next year.

To coincide with the draw, Pararoos head coach Paul Brown took announced his 12-player squad.

Brown believes the squad he has selected is the strongest side Australia will take away to date and will surprise many of his international opponents. "Our goal is to qualify for the 2012 London Paralympic Games and at this moment in time, I am optimistic about our chances," he said.

The Pararoos, who are funded by the Australian Paralympic Committee and supported by Football Federation Australia, had a camp in Sydney from May 27-29, before flying out to the Netherlands on June 10 before their first match on the June 18, when they meet Spain. Two days later, they will face Brazil and their final group match will be against the host nation, The Netherlands, on June 22.

FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

Pararoos Squad For Holland

Name	State
David Barber (Captain)	QLD
Chris Pyne (Vice Captain)	NSW
Ben Atkins	NSW
Jared Eiby	QLD
Brett Fairhall	NSW
Thomas Goodman	SA
Scott Kennedy	QLD
Sam Larkings	NSW
Beau Menzies	QLD
Jamie Paulsen	QLD
Ben Roche	VIC
Jack Williams	NSW

FFA AND STATES FORUM

FFA Chairman Frank Lowy and FFA CEO Ben Buckley

Football Federation Australia (FFA) Chairman, Mr Frank Lowy AC, and FFA CEO Ben Buckley recently met with the leaders of the State and Territory Member Federations in Sydney as part of the game's regular national consultations.

Nick Monteleone (President, FFV), Rachel Harrigan (President, Capital Football), Andrew Cripps (President, Football Federation Northern Territory) and Robert Sestan (chairman, Football NSW) were the new faces at the leaders' summit.

Liam Twigger (Vice-President, Football West) was attending on behalf of the new Football West President Bob Kucera, while Northern NSW Football CEO David Eland was representing his Chairman Peter Moore.

Also in attendance were Sean Collins (President, Football Federation Tasmania), Rauf Soulio (President, Football Federation South Australia) and Dennis O'Brien (Football Queensland). The meeting discussed the FFA Strategic Plan for the 2014 FIFA World Cup cycle, national governance structures, the 'My Football Club' project, relations between Member Federations and Hyundai A-League clubs, the Westfield W-League and the Club Accreditation Pilot being conducted by FFV.

Mr Lowy reaffirmed that he intended to seek a fresh, four-year mandate as chairman by standing for re-election at the FFA AGM this September.

"There's still much work to do," he said. "I have the energy and determination for the task and I will be 100 per cent committed. I'll be asking for your support."

FFA CEO Ben Buckley said the meeting reflected the clarity of purpose flowing from the historic National Charter signed last October.

"The game has never been more unified in terms of the working relationship between the national body and the Member Federations."

THE NEW BREED

We speak with the indomitable Luke Wilkshire about the new breed of Qantas Socceroos coming through the ranks WORDS Aidan Ormond

Kruse made an impact in Qatar
RIGHT Valeri standing tall

NOT SO LONG AGO there was much talk about the regeneration of the national team. The biggest issue was how that would take place? Should there be a rush to blood new, young players? Were many of them ready for the step up? And were they better than who was playing already?

What has transpired over the last year has been a natural process, one more evolutionary than revolutionary. And it's working.

Beginning at the AFC Asian Cup in January, we have been reaping the benefits of this more measured renewal.

Squad players in their mid-20s are now pushing the more experienced players for starting positions, while some of the younger faces are starting to earn some playing time too.

The Australian shirt continues to be a prized possession, one that is still earned and not just handed out because the coaching staff feel the need to make changes for change's sake.

The new generation of Qantas Socceroos stars have proven they are up to the task and are capable of leading the team of the future.

"There was a time back a year or two ago when people were starting to question or wonder who was going to come through," recalls Luke Wilkshire, the Qantas Socceroos' attack-minded full-back. "Are there players to come through? I think we're starting to see that now. The younger players are starting to perform for their country. They're playing club football in Europe or Asia and doing well there too."

The likes of Mile Jedinak, Carl Valeri, Neil Kilkenny and Robbie Kruse form part of a new breed who are becoming increasingly important as Qantas Socceroo coach Holger Osieck seeks to balance squad rejuvenation with the challenge of crucial FIFA World Cup qualifiers through the AFC.

Australia's AFC Asian Cup 2011 campaign marked the start of the regenerative process for the Socceroos, with Osieck happy to give relatively inexperienced - and in some cases, untested - players a chance in a big tournament. The result was an energised, rejuvenated Socceroos who reached their first major final, losing to a talented Japanese side 1-0.

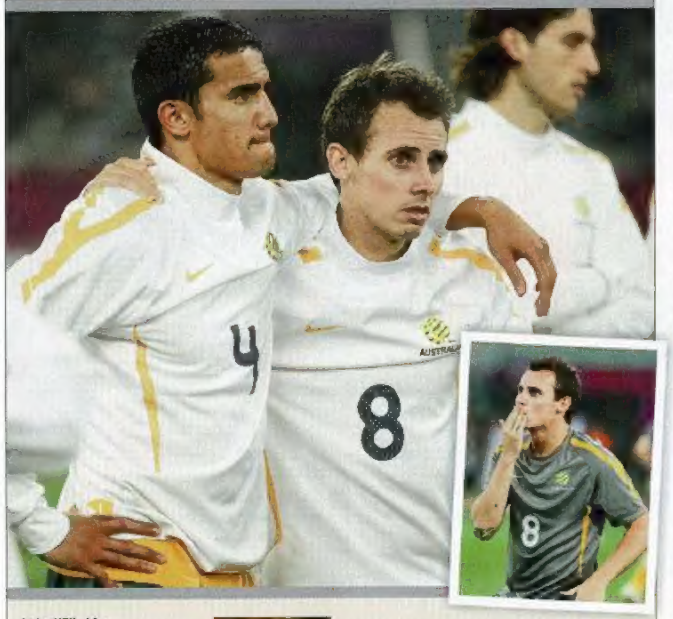
Each of the players brings something different to the pitch. Carl Valeri seems to have been around forever, yet he's only 26. Since debuting in 2007 away to China, the Italian-based Qantas Socceroo has racked up 35 appearances for the national team.

Crucially the Canberra-born midfielder is now considered a starting XI player in the green and gold after strong performances in Qatar and in South Africa last year.

Alongside him in the engine-room is Mile Jedinak. Another 26 year-old, he was outstanding in the AFC Asian Cup, further cementing his position in the national team following his first FIFA World Cup last year.

Wilkshire stays cool from the spot

LUKE Wilkshire



Luke Wilkshire

Age 29
Club Dynamo Moscow
Position Right-back/Midfielder
National honours U-20, U-23
Former clubs Middlesbrough, Bristol City, FC Twente

Leadership. It's been a by-word for Qantas Socceroo excellence over the last two World Cup campaigns. In recent times, both Mark Viduka and Lucas Neill have showed the value of strong leaders at big tournaments. Looking back further, Kevin Muscat, Craig Moore, Paul Wade, John Kosmina and legendary 1970s skipper Peter Wilson have also led by example.

And it's a quality Wilkshire has in spades since the Russian-based Qantas Socceroo burst onto the national scene in Germany five years ago.

With his trademark big heart, boundless energy and ability to get forward as well as defend, the former Middlesbrough, Bristol City and FC Twente man is every inch a leader, as well as a team man.

He's respected and leads by example, and on top of that, he's an individual with his feet firmly on the ground – just like many Qantas Socceroo captains of the past.

"When I was a young player coming through, there were a lot of leaders in the national team: Poppa [Tony Popovic], Musky [Kevin Muscat], Moorey [Craig Moore], Tony Vidmar and Schwarzy as well.

"You see this situation in many teams – the older guys have to step up and bring these younger guys into the team to help make them perform.

"That's part of the role of the senior players. It's not just about your play but your attitude and the way you approach things and help others coming through."

Wilkshire's move from the Dutch Eredivisie in 2008 to Russian outfit Dynamo Moscow has been a success and he continues to be a regular at right-back for the Qantas Socceroos. He can even play as a holding midfielder when need be.

"I never say I'm satisfied," he adds. "I'm always looking to improve and to go forward. It's no different now... perhaps even more so.

"I've got a lot of hunger and desire to do something and win something. Football's a funny game, you never know what's around the corner."

Kilkenny, 25, trained with the main Qantas Socceroo squad for the 2006 FIFA World Cup after having debuted against Liechtenstein in a pre-World Cup friendly. He's made seven appearances to date for the green and gold – mostly in this last 12 months – with his form for English club Leeds United catching the eye of Osieck.

And Kruse – bound for Bundesliga side Fortuna Düsseldorf after the two friendlies against New Zealand and Serbia – is very much the new kid on the block having received his debut call-up for the AFC Asian Cup following a blistering season with Melbourne Victory in the Hyundai A-League.

In the case of Wilkshire, he's part of both the past and the future. After impressing with the Olyroos in 2004, he made his full

> "It's an opportunity for the young players to step up"

debut in 2005 and since 2006, he's been first choice as the Qantas Socceroos' attacking right-back.

"A few people are missing and it's not often you'll have that, so in that sense it's a real opportunity for the young boys to really step up and stake their claim," says Wilkshire.

"A green and gold jersey has to be earned and it's been like that for a long time now. It's an opportunity and you have to take these chances because they don't come around very often. These boys are really trying to make a name for themselves at international level.

"We've got some very important games in World Cup qualification later in the year. So playing back home in Australia, it's a chance to show what they've been doing and what they've got and really stake a claim to be in the squad for World Cup qualifiers."

Names such as Tim Cahill, Lucas Neill, Mark Schwarzer, Brett Emerton and Harry Kewell have rock star status to green and gold fans. And rightly so.

It's been a generation that will go down in history as one of the greatest-ever to wear the shirt.

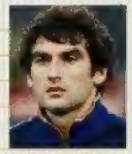
But with Wilkshire, Valeri, Jedinak, Kilkenny and Kruse, a new breed is emerging outside of these household names and, like them, they have a winning mentality and powerful passion for the green and gold tradition.

As the Qantas Socceroos head into their June friendlies with New Zealand then Serbia, the future is looking bright. ■

NEW BREED Mile Jedinak

The one-time Mariner has taken his chance in the Aussie midfield since debuting three years ago

Mile Jedinak



Age 26
Club Gençlerbirliği
Position Midfielder
National honours U-20
Former clubs Sydney United, CC Mariners, Antalyaspor

From a very wet and sweaty Singapore National Stadium to the pristine pitches of downtown Doha, Mile Jedinak has come a long way in the green and gold over the last three years.

His rise culminated in a breakthrough performance in Qatar last January at the AFC Asian Cup 2011. Two vital goals – his first for the Qantas Socceroos, against Korea Republic and Bahrain – were complemented by a confident and typically hard-running, hard-tackling show in the central third.

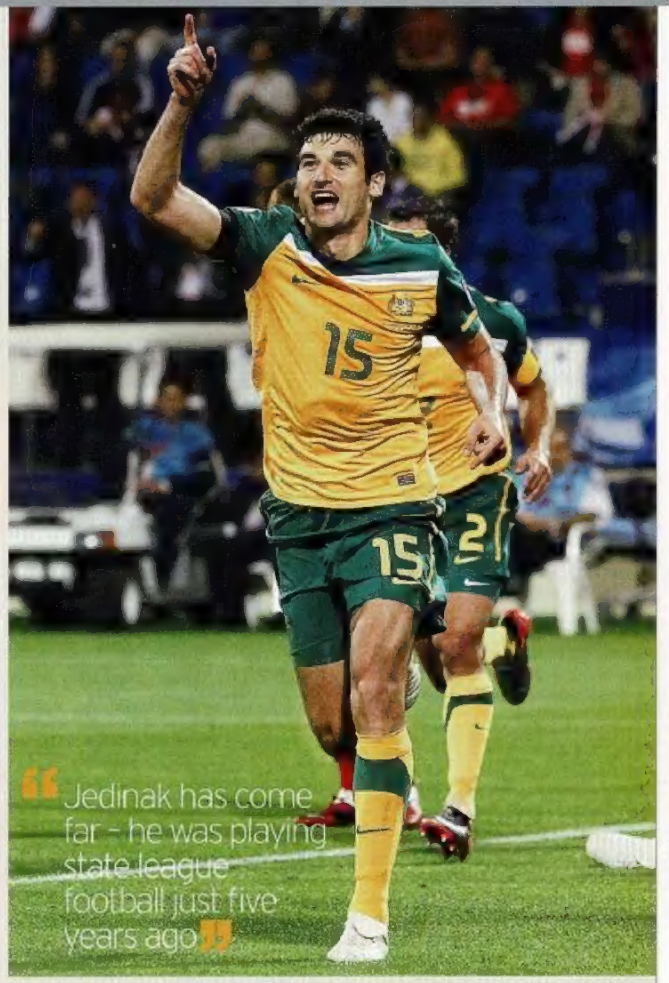
The Turkish-based midfielder worked his socks off, providing cover for the central defenders while still breaking forward and providing support for the forward two. It was a true box-to-box showing for the Sydney-born player who is currently with Ankara-based Gencleribirligi in the Turkish Süper Lig. After his 2008 debut against Singapore, 'Jedi' has enjoyed a steady rise to the top. He's now the proud owner of 24 Qantas Socceroo caps and, at 26, he could be there busting a gut in that engine-room for many more years to come.

Wilkshire, a player who himself values commitment and hard work for the team, has been impressed by what he's seen so far from the tall, physical Jedinak.

"He's really claimed his place now in the team and that especially came to the fore in the Asian Cup," says Wilkshire. "I think he's now an important player. He's got a lot of ability on the ball, he's very strong and he has that presence in the midfield."

However the Qantas Socceroo right-back was cautious not to go too overboard in his praise of his team-mate, stressing the importance of not standing still and resting on your laurels. "There's more for him to give. He's got better times to come ahead."

What is incredible is just how far Jedinak has come in such a short time. It wasn't too long ago that Jedinak was playing part-time football in the NSW Premier League. That was before the wily Scot Lawrie McKinna scouted him for his Hyundai A-League club



> "Jedinak has come far – he was playing state league football just five years ago"

Central Coast Mariners in 2006, following Jedinak's eye-catching displays in Sydney United's title-winning season.

After a series of short-term stints in the side, Jedinak soon became an invaluable member of the Gosford-based club's midfield, leading to interest overseas. Sure enough, Gençlerbirligi came knocking and in January 2009 he took the chance to further his career.

Judging by his performances since in the green and gold, it's been a wise move. He is now as close as he's ever been to a regular starting XI berth in Holger Osieck's midfield.

And his two goals in Qatar have added that extra layer to his prodigious output.

"He can strike a ball and he's got that presence in the air in the box as we saw in Qatar," adds Wilkshire. "So there's no reason he won't be able to pick up a few more goals along the way."

NEW BREED Carl Valeri

The Canberra-born midfield destroyer is right at home playing in the technical leagues of Italy

Carl Valeri

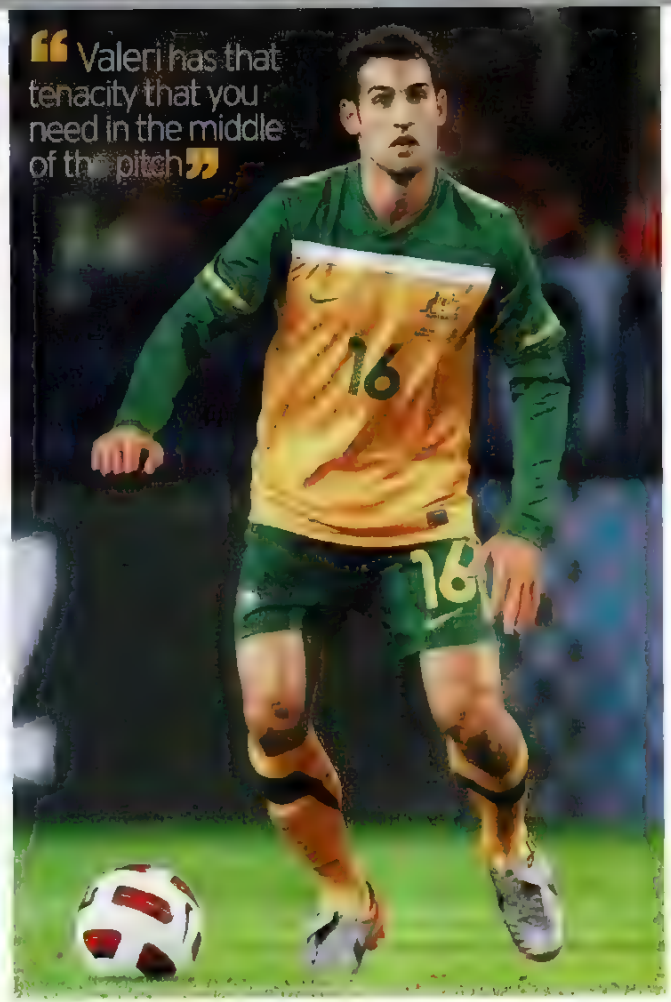
Age: 26

Club: Sassuolo

Position: Midfielder

Represented Australia: U-17, U-20, U-23

Former clubs: Inter Milan, SPAL, Grosseto



Carl Valeri is a success story that's been years in the making. After playing for Australia at all levels, including the 2001 FIFA U-17 World Cup and 2004 Athens Olympics, the likable Canberran has spent most of the last decade in the highly technical leagues of Italy before finally debuting for the national team in 2007.

Now, over the last 12 months, all the hard work and patience has paid off handsomely for Valeri and the Qantas Socceroos.

With Jason Culina's untimely injury and Vince Grella not playing in the green and gold since the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the Serie B player from Sassuolo has effortlessly moved up from being a talented squad player to a starting XI Qantas Socceroo.

This didn't just happen overnight - it's been coming for some time for the 26 year-old defensive midfielder.

His father is a well-known, ex-national league player Walter Valeri and being from Canberra puts him in a small but classy group of players, such as former Qantas Socceroo Ned Zelic.

After representing Australia at all levels as a youngster, Valeri was long touted as a future star in the national team

And now that prediction is starting to come true. A 2010 FIFA World Cup was backed up by an eye-catching performance in the central corridors of midfield at the AFC Asian Cup 2011 last January in Qatar.

"He's the same as Mile [Jedinak], he's bided his time," says Wilkshire, clearly impressed. "He's had to wait for his opportunity and now he's playing well and taking it.

"He's got that mould slightly similar to the way Vinnie [Grella] plays. He has that tenacity in the middle of the pitch and is great at breaking up play, it's an important job for the Socceroos."

At age 26, he's at an ideal age to power the Qantas Socceroo engine - not too old and not too young.

At club level Valeri has played all his professional football in Italy, after he was signed by Inter Milan straight from the Australian Institute of Sport following the 2001 FIFA U-17 World Cup.

After several seasons in their youth and reserve teams, he was loaned out to SPAL and Grosseto in the Italian lower divisions, which served him well as he continues his club career in the highly-rated Serie B

Furthermore the confidence of regular game-time under Holger Osieck is helping too.

"He's another young player who like Mile still has better times to come," adds Wilkshire.

"He's still got it all in front of him but definitely you can see him coming of age the way he's playing and the belief he now has.

"No doubt in the modern game you need to be able to get about the pitch and these players [like Valeri] have that, it's crucial, particularly in midfield."

Starts 1/06/11 – Ends 9/08/11
Entrants must be Australian residents 18yrs+
Major prize must be claimed by 5:00pm 10/08/11
Major prize must be taken on specified dates (Aug/Sept 2011)

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NEW BREED Neil Kilkenny

The tough and mobile Leeds United midfielder has shown he has a big future for the green and gold

Neil Kilkenny

Age: 25

Club: Leeds United

Position: Midfielder

National team: U-23

Previous clubs: Birmingham, Oldham

There's something very likable about Neil Kilkenny. He may not be the tallest player around but he's as tough and as hard-working as they come.

And, after a grounding in the Arsenal youth team, he has that dash of technical ability that sets him apart and a mental toughness that's bred into players who grow up playing football in Britain.

At just 25, the former Qantas Olyroo gives the Qantas Socceroos another option in midfield both now and in the future. How good can he be? He can be as good as he wants to be, says Wilkshire.

"How far he can go will be determined by himself," says Wilkshire. "But he's got ability, is great on the ball and technically very good. He's got a great mind for football; he's got a football brain.

"And he's got that aura of confidence about him on the pitch. He's not afraid to take the ball and create the play."

Kilkenny, born in England, moved to Australia at a young age where he grew up in Brisbane. He showed promise and was handed the Queensland schoolboys captain's armband, but at the age of 11 he and his family moved back to England to maximise his chances of a career in football.

After a spell with Arsenal's youth team as an apprentice, he joined Birmingham City in 2004 then later Oldham Athletic on loan, but he now seems to have found his place with a club that knows Qantas Socceroos very well: Leeds United.

At the former club of Kewell, Viduka, Burns and Okon, Kilkenny has flourished after being signed in January 2008. This season, he's helped the Elland Road side to rejuvenate their stocks in the English Championship, making 31 appearances for United in league and cup.

There have been reports that Kilkenny might leave Elland Road in the European summer despite the player professing his desire to stay. However, if it's true, there would be no shortage of suitors. At 25 and just moving into the fringes of the national team, he will surely attract attention.

He's shown over the years in cup games against Premier League opposition, he wouldn't be out of place in the biggest league in England.

However, now 'Killa' has been given a chance by Osieck he clearly sees him as part of a new breed of midfielder with both youth and experience on his side.

Kilkenny appeared against Bahrain, Iraq and Japan at the AFC Asian Cup this year and was part of pre-tournament friendly against UAE.

You get the feeling we'll see a lot more of this skilled technician with a hard edge over the next couple of FIFA World Cup campaigns.

NEW BREED Robbie Kruse

Wilkshire says Kruse gives the Qantas Socceroos 'something different'. We couldn't agree more

Robbie Kruse

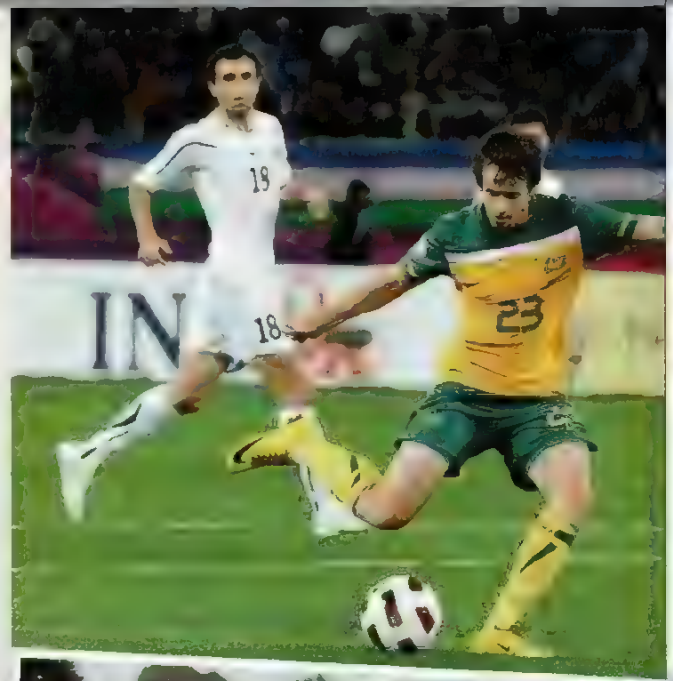
Age: 22

Club: Fortuna Dussedorf

Position: Winger/Striker

National team: U-17, U-20

Previous clubs: Brisbane Roar, Melbourne Victory



"He's come on, he's raw, he's fresh, he's got pace to burn and is dangerously threatening and I guess he's something different for us," says Wilkshire, when quizzed about the new face on the green and gold block, Robbie Kruse.

But he also has some good advice for the lightning-quick striker who is starting out on his international and European club career after some exciting seasons in the Hyundai A-League.

"He's done well to step up, but you can get young players to come in and do that for one or two games without getting the consistency over time. And that goes for club football too, not just at international level

"To play at that level in Germany is another step in his career, so it's about starting from scratch in Europe. You've got to build your name and build your reputation."

Kruse heads off to Fortuna in Germany after the two home friendlies, making them somewhat of a farewell for the former Brisbane Roar flyer, who has shone in recent times for Melbourne Victory.

Just as Kruse is setting out on his career in Europe, the early days for Wilkshire at Middlesbrough were about establishing your brand as a player.

"And to get your team-mates to believe in you and your coach to believe in you," stresses Wilkshire, who knows a bit about leaving for foreign shores early in a career. "That's the biggest challenge. It's not easy, it's hard yards and you've got to earn that respect and earn that backing from your coach and the players you play with

"Everybody is fighting for a living and fighting for a spot and they'll be no different. But you've got to be up for that challenge and be prepared for knockbacks, disappointments and hard times.

"But it's how you deal with them that makes you who you are. He's [Kruse] got this challenge in front of him both for club and country and he's going to have to be mentally strong and really have that self belief," adds Wilkshire.

"But he's got the ability and there's nothing really stopping him when he wants it and has that desire."

Kruse was also said to be the fastest player at training in the Qantas Socceroo camp during the AFC Asian Cup. Wilkshire confirmed Kruse's lightning-quick pace, but joked, "Yes, he was the quickest at training... behind me!"

Meet your Socceroos

Here is the squad picked by Qantas Socceroos head coach Holger Osieck

Holger **Osieck**

Age 53

Previous Head Coach

Appointed in 2010 the German-born coach enjoyed instant success taking Australia to the AFC Asian Cup 2011 final.

Robbie **Hooker**

Age 44

Position Coach

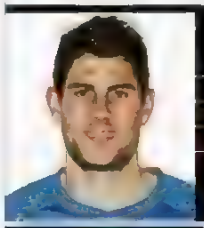
Capped 22 times for the Qantas Socceroos he worked with the Westfield Matildas before joining Osieck's coaching team in 2010.

FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA STAFF

Phil Wolanski Head of Delegation
Han Berger Technical Director
Holger Osieck Head Coach
Gary Moretti Team Manager
Robbie Hooker Coach
Tony Franken Goalkeeping Coach
Ron Smith Analyst
Dr Mark Jones Team Doctor
Les Gelis Senior Physiotherapist
Kurt Lisle Physiotherapist
Luke Attwell Masseur
Dom Rabsch Equipment Manager
Adam Mark Media Manager
Mark Saliba Security

AUSTRALIA

Goalkeepers

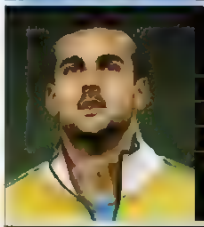


Nathan **Coe**

Age 27
Position Goalkeeper
Club Sonderjysk Elitesport (Denmark)
Appearances 1

Coe is finally getting the chance to show how good he is after almost a decade in Europe and Scandinavia.

Coe debuted in January this year when Australia played [illegible] Middle East. The Brisbane born shot-stopper was always a talented keeper within our national youth team system and this [illegible] year stint at PSV. Since then he's been based in Copenhagen Coe turns 27 just days before June's two friendlies.

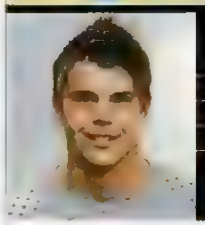


Adam **Federici**

Age 25
Position Goalkeeper
Club Reading (England)
Appearances 3

Federici is coming off a stellar year at the Royals and he is set to bring that form into the national team.

And with Mark Schwarzer not named in this squad, the [illegible] show what he can do. "Fedders" made his full Qantas Socceroo debut in 2007 but has been [illegible] legend but there's no doubt at aged 26 Federici has many more years in really establish his name in the green and gold.



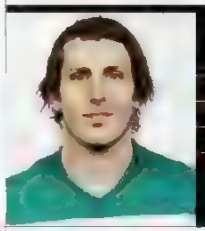
Mitchell **Langerak**

Age 22
Position Goalkeeper
Club Borussia Dortmund (Germany)
Appearances -

The future is very bright for the Qantas Socceroo keeping ranks after Langerak's first season in Europe.

The tall and powerful former Melbourne Victory glovesman [illegible] with the black and yellows but he put in a sensational performance last February to help his new club to a 3-1 away win over Bayern Munich. At 22 expect to see the name Langerak feature for many years to come judging by this season.

Defenders



Jonathan **McKain**

Age 28
Position Defender
Club Al-Nassr (Saudi Arabia)
Appearances 14

McKain continues to develop well in one of the toughest leagues in the AFC - Saudi Arabia.

This is part of a growing trend with a number of Qantas Socceroos plying their trade across our confederation. For McKain he is one of the most reliable defenders we have who [illegible] esti and Wellington Phoenix defender combines power with good timing and great vision. And at 28 he is coming into the best years of his career.

Sasa **Ognenovski**

Age 32
Position Defender
Club Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma (Korea Republic)
Appearances 8

Ognenovski is one of the great Qantas Socceroo stories and has fitted perfectly into our defensive unit.

His career has gone from strength to strength beginning with part time football in the VPL till 2006 before moving into the Hyundai A-League and then being signed by the K League club. There, he won the prestigious armband and captained the side - and scored - in the AFC Champions League final last year. What a rise for this powerful defender who got his first callup late last year. He hasn't looked back since.

Rhys **Williams**

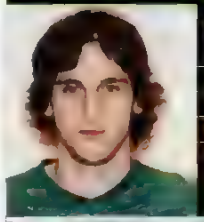
Age 22
Position Defender
Club Middlesbrough (England)
Appearances 3

We welcome back a favourite to the Qantas Socceroo fold after a horrendous year with injury.

A year ago Williams was set for his first ever FIFA World Cup but a persistent groin problem robbed him of his dream. He only just recently resumed his club career. What we saw of him after debuting in 2009, was a composed right sided defender who brings a new dimension to the green and gold defence. He can play central too and can get forward using an impressive range of ball skills. His return is a huge plus.

Wilkshire celebrates his penalty against Germany in March this year

Holman gets loose at January's AFC Asian Cup in Qatar

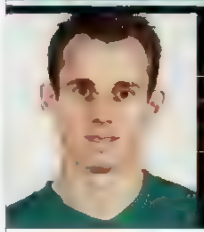


Matthew **Spiranovic**

Age 22
Position Defender
Club Urawa Red Diamonds (Japan)
Appearances 5

Spiranovic is your classic ball-playing central defender and is a star in waiting for the Qantas Socceroos

Spiranovic played youth football in Geelong before turning out for Melbourne Victory in a World Club Championship qualifier aged just 16. In 2006 Spiranovic joined FC Nuremberg where he remained for the next few years playing several matches a season before moving to one of the biggest Japanese clubs Urawa Reds last year. It's the same club for whom Holger Osieck coached to an AFC Champions League.



Luke **Wilkshire**

Age 29
Position Defender
Club Dinamo Moscow (Russia)
Appearances 56

Wilkshire has become one of the first players on Holger Osieck's team-sheet.

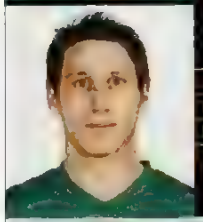
And for good reason. He's everything you want from a player - works hard, can attack and defend and has a big heart. The Wollongong-born 'Wilko' began his Euro career in England with Middlesbrough and Bristol before a spell in Holland with FC Twente. He made a move to Dinamo Moscow in 2008 and has featured regularly in that side ever since. A highly respected club and national team player.

Michael Zullo

Age 22
Position Defender
Club FC Utrecht (Holland)
Appearances 2

Another Hyundai A-League product who is making his way in European football.

Along with Robbie Kruse the pair ripped it up at Roar in recent years. This alerted European scouts and Zullo made his way to Holland to a club that also featured two other Aussie players - Adam Sarota and Tommy Oar. With David Carney unavailable through injury Zullo - a converted left winger - may get a chance at left back, the position he's been playing with his Dutch Eredivisie club.



Mark Milligan

Age 25
Position Defender
Club JEF United (Japan)
Appearances 10

The former Qantas Olyroos captain has slotted easily into J-League football with JEF United.

Milligan first burst onto the scene with Northern Spirit but did enough in the first season of the Hyundai A-League with Sydney FC to be noticed by the national team. Milligan has [illegible] has been known to play a variety of roles as a defender and midfielder. Japan is his second AFC league after a spell with Shanghai Shenhua in 2009.

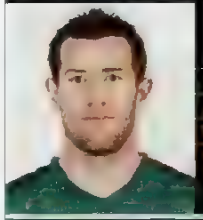
Lucas Neill

Age 33
Position Defender
Club Galatasaray (Turkey)
Appearances 70

One of Australia's most recognisable stars, Neill seems to grow in stature every time he plays for his country.

Neill made his Qantas Socceroos debut in 1996 and he has really established himself as our defensive linchpin and leader. His performances at the AFC Asian Cup 2011 and against Germany in March proof that he's still at the top of his game. A star in the English Premier League at West Ham and Blackburn he's transferred his form to Turkey in recent years to great success. Quite simply, he's an inspiration and a fine defender

Midfielders



Brett Emerton

Age 32
Position Midfielder
Club Blackburn Rovers (England)
Appearances 83

Emerton is closing in on 100 caps for the Qantas Socceroos in what's been a fantastic career with Australia.

'Emo' can be relied on to do the job and continues to have great engines as he's proved once again in the EPL. Fresh from scoring against Manchester United on the day the Red Devils confirmed their title, he shows no signing of slowing down proving himself to be one of the greatest ever athletes we've produced in the national team. He debuted in the green and gold in 1998 and has been at Rovers since 2003.

Brett Holman

Age 27
Position Midfielder
Club AZ Alkmaar (Holland)
Appearances 45

A sensational last 12 months has taken Holman's green and gold career to another level of greatness.

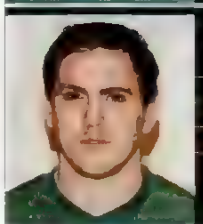
Holman was always hugely important to the team with his willingness to do the hard yards - and now after a flurry of goals including famously two at the last FIFA World Cup he's shaping up as another match-winner for Holger Osieck. Holland has been Holman's home for much of his overseas career after making his name in the Australian youth development system. He debuted in the green and gold in 2006.

Mile Jedinak

Age 26
Position Midfielder
Club Genclerbirligi (Turkey)
Appearances 24

Jedinak's AFC Asian Cup earlier this year was a breakthrough tournament for the power midfielder.

Three years after debuting for the green and gold Jedinak really is looking at home in the midfield with his all-action displays. He added to those performances in Qatar with a brace of goals at crucial times adding another important layer to his game. The former Mariner in the Hyundai A-League has been in Europe now for two and a half years and clearly he's benefitting from his career in the Turkish league.

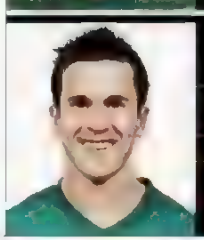


Neil Kilkenny

Age 25
Position Midfielder
Club Leeds United (England)
Appearances 7

Kilkenny is winning more and more fans as he builds his career in England after three years with Leeds United.

Although born in England, Kilkenny spent time in Brisbane as a child and after debuting in 2006 for the Qantas Socceroos is now in a good position to really cement his place in the side after being picked in the AFC Asian Cup 2011 squad. Kilkenny combines a real tenacity and work-rate in the mid field with an excellent technical ability after he was schooled the Arsenal way before joining Birmingham City in 2004.



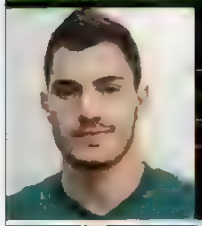
Matthew McKay

Age 28
Position Midfielder
Club Brisbane Roar (Australia)
Appearances 13

One of the feel-good stories of Australia's AFC Asian Cup campaign, McKay has blossomed under Osieck.

The Brisbane Roar captain slotted into the national team midfield like a glove adding vital set-ups for goals along the way. Little wonder his elevation was one of the stories of the tournament from a local perspective. McKay was one of the prime movers behind Roar's standout season on the domestic front with his prodigious work rate and excellent link-play and passing. Green and gold debut was in 2006.

The indefatigable [illegible] Emerton earlier this year against Uzbekistan

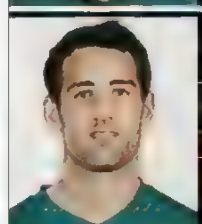


James **Troisi**

Age 22
Position Midfielder
Club Kayserispor Kulubu (Turkey)
Appearances 3

An Adelaide product has had an much-travelled career - from Adelaide to England's Newcastle and now Turkey.

Another player for the future, Troisi has been overseas [illegible] Geordie club. There he played in the reserves and was on the [illegible] up. He's plied his trade at Genclerbirligi before catching the eye of Kayserispor after banging in a hat-trick against them. He's quick, skilful and very exciting.



Carl **Valeri**

Age 26
Position Midfielder
Club US Sassuolo Calcio (Italy)
Appearances 36

Canberra-raised Valeri has refined his game in Italy and is delivering big-time in the Qantas Socceroo midfield.

[illegible] football in Italy, after he was signed by Inter Milan, who have loaned him out to lower-level clubs to gain experience. Valeri is now pretty much a regular after starring at the AFC Asian Cup 2011 in Qatar earlier this year.

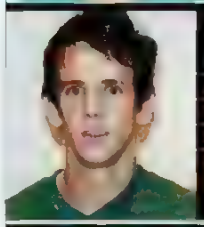
Strikers

Alex **Brosque**

Age 27
Position Striker
Club Shimizu Pulse (Japan)
Appearances 5

In the middle of his first J-League season Brosque has hit a goal-scoring hot-streak at Shimizu.

It's this form and Brosque's versatility - he can lead the line and play in behind in a 4-3-3 -that makes him so important a player. Brosque was a star in the Hyundai A-League with Sydney FC and Roar though this is not his first spell overseas after a stint in Holland and Belgium early in his career. At 27 he's at his peak and playing in the highly technical and pacy J-League can only boost his green and gold career.



Robbie **Kruse**

Age 22
Position Striker
Club Melbourne Victory (Australia)
Appearances 4

This year has been Kruse's after the lightning quick striker was named in the AFC Asian Cup squad.

It was just reward for some sparkling displays domestically at Melbourne Victory and, before that, Brisbane Roar. And to cap off a year to remember for the Brisbane-born forward, he has inked a deal with German club Fortuna Dusseldorf and heads overseas for his first Euro pre-season immediately after these two games against New Zealand and Serbia. Kruse debuted for Australia against UAE at the start of the year.

Josh **Kennedy**

Age 28
Position Striker
Club Nagoya Grampus (Japan)
Appearances 23

Kennedy continues to be one of the most dangerous strikers in the J-League at powerhouse Nagoya.

Coached by Serbian former playing great Dragan Stojkovic, the tall central forward has made a splash in the J-League since joining in 2009 following almost seven years in the German leagues. Kennedy also made a splash with national team at the 2006 FIFA World Cup, making his debut in a pre-tournament friendly before coming on as a sub against Japan to help bamboozle the Blue Samurai in that famous 3-1 win.

Archie **Thompson**

Age 32
Position Striker
Club Melbourne Victory (Australia)
Appearances 33

It's fantastic to have Thompson back - one of our most bubbly of characters and dangerous players.

[illegible] played for the national team in Canberra last year and with injuries hopefully a thing of the past, the New Zealand born striker is set to turn it on in Adelaide and in his hometown of Melbourne. He has 21 goals for Australia.

Dario **Vidosic**

Age 24
Position Striker
Club DSC Arminia Bielefeld (Germany)
Appearances 12

The former Roar attacker scored his first ever goal for the green and gold last year. The first of many we hope.

That strike was against New Zealand at the MCG and the [illegible] Qantas Socceroo star. He possesses speed and great skill on the ball - attributes which have been enhanced since his move from Brisbane to Germany's FC Nuremberg and now Arminia Bielefeld. He grew up in Queensland and is the son of Brisbane Roar assistant coach Rado Vidosic.

23.06.10

Holman's bomb at the Mbombela

Aidan Ormond recalls a special moment from Nelspruit at the 2010 FIFA World Cup

It was a sight to behold. A piece of beautiful skill that brought joy and, briefly, hope to millions of proud Qantas Socceroo fans worldwide. How could we forget Brett Holman's superb long-range effort against Serbia of the FIFA 2010 World Cup? Let's take you back...

It was Australia's final group match and the green and gold had to win to have any chance of progressing to the knockout stages. After holding out a classy Serbian outfit in a frenetic first 45 minutes, the Qantas Socceroos cut loose in the second stanza.

This was Australian football at its absolute best, exemplified by a blistering four-minute spell that reaped two goals. First a trademark Tim Cahill header lifted hopes on 69 minutes. Suddenly, Aussie fans had a sniff of the knockout round. Then Holman took centre stage.

He'd been on the pitch for less than ten minutes when a headed clearance by the Serbs was won and laid-off to him just inside the opponent's half. With the White Eagles' defence backing off, the AZ Alkmaar man sensed his opportunity.

Running at the heart of the defence and seemingly oblivious to the five defenders around him, Holman unleashed a swinging, angled rocket that brushed past the arm of Manchester United defender Nemanja Vidic and eluded the outstretched hands of keeper Vladimir Stojkovic to bust the bottom of the Serbian net.

The Australian fans were delirious. The all-night parties back home ramped up in noise as an anticipatory buzz warmed the chill air. The fans in the stadium punched the night air. Could we win and go through? Well, we did win but sadly the 2-1 score line wasn't enough to progress.

However, regardless of the bigger picture, Holman gave the green and gold faithful another glorious FIFA World Cup moment with his mighty, memorable bomb at the Mbombela stadium. ■

AUSTRALIA

Fill in numbers as line-ups are announced

GOALKEEPERS

- [ ] [illegible] Carr
- [ ] Adam **Federici**
- [ ] Mitchell **Langerak**

DEFENDERS

- [ ] Lucas **Neill**
- [ ] Mark **Milligan**
- [ ] Matthew **Spiranovic**
- [ ] [illegible] **Wilkshire**
- [ ] [illegible] **Williams**
- [ ] Jonathan **McKain**
- [ ] Sasa **Ognenovski**
- [ ] Michael **Zullo**

MIDFIELDERS

- [ ] Matthew **McKay**
- [ ] James **Troisi**
- [ ] [illegible] **Holman**
- [ ] Mile **Jedinak**
- [ ] Carl **Valeri**
- [ ] Neil **Kilkenny**
- [ ] Brett **Emerton**

FORWARDS

- [ ] Archie **Thompson**
- [ ] Alex **Brosque**
- [ ] Josh **Kennedy**
- [ ] Robbie **Kruse**
- [ ] [illegible] **Viduka**

GOALSCORERS

v SERBIA

GOALKEEPERS

- [ ] Damir Kahriman
- [ ] Zeljko Brkić
- [ ] Bojan Saranov

FORWARDS

- [ ] Ranko Despotović
- [ ] Miljan Mrdaković
- [ ] Jovan Damjanović

MIDFIELDERS

- [ ] Dejan Stanković
- [ ] Zdravko Kuzmanović
- [ ] Radosav Petrović
- [ ] Marko Mirić
- [ ] Veseljko Trivunović
- [ ] Zoran Tošić
- [ ] Adem Ljajić
- [ ] Dusan Petronijević
- [ ] Branislav Jovanović
- [ ] Miralem Sulejmani

DEFENDERS

- [ ] Pavle Ninkov
- [ ] Nenad Tomović
- [ ] Neven Subotić
- [ ] Milan Biševac
- [ ] Milan Vilotić
- [ ] Slobodan Rajković
- [ ] Aleksandar Kolarov
- [ ] Ivan Obradović

GOALSCORERS

SERBIA

THE EAGLES HAVE LANDED

IT SAYS MUCH ABOUT THE PEDIGREE OF TONIGHT'S OPPONENTS that the squads for the last few UEFA Champions League finals have featured a number of Serbian players.

With that as a marker, you can understand why fans are excited at seeing the 16th FIFA world ranked nation parade their football pedigree in Melbourne tonight.

Simply put, the nation of Serbia produces fabulous footballers.

However, that doesn't mean they have found that elusive winning formula yet. That's still being finessed on the international stage after their first FIFA World Cup last year as an independent nation saw them crash out with the Qantas Socceroos in the group stages.

But it's the individual players who are continually passing the test for the White Eagles. A decade or so ago we marvelled at the likes of AC Milan favourite Dejan Savicevic, Aston Villa striker Savo Milosevic, Dragan "Piksi" Stojkovic at Marseille, not to mention Sinisa Mihajlovic and Predrag Mijatovic.

And today the Serbs are still coming up with the goods.

At Manchester United, we all know about Nemanja Vidic. The 29-year-old is a proven UEFA Champions League and English Premier League talent and has won numerous awards for his brilliance as a central defender. Zoran Tosic, the attacking left-sided star, joined Vidic at Old Trafford in 2009 but these days plays in the Russian league. At 24, we're sure to see more of him.

Across Manchester at FA Cup winners City, 25-year-old Aleksander Kolarov is also building his reputation, while Chelsea's Branislav Ivanovic and Liverpool's Milan Jovanovic have also been settling in well to English football.

> "Simply put, Serbia produces fabulous footballers, now they have to find the winning formula"

And beanpole striker Nikola Zigic also making his presence felt in England at Birmingham City, winning a League Cup winners' medal, although his club were relegated this year.

In Europe, majestic Serbian national team captain Dejan Stankovic is a star at Inter Milan - and the scorer of some outrageous goals - who has already won a UEFA Champions League medal, while striker Marko Pantelic may also be 32 but he still is a gem plying his trade with Greek club Olympiacos.

And how could we forget Milos Krasic? The tricky blond winger and former Russian league player plies his trade in one of the most technical leagues in Europe in Italy with Juventus.

That's a snapshot of some of the biggest names in the Serbian national team. Pretty impressive, you'd have to say, for a nation of just over seven million people.

Serbs are at big clubs and in big leagues, but what of the new breed of Serbians?

Luckily a number are already at good clubs in Europe and over the next five years or so, they could make the step up as the national team regenerates their stocks.

For an expert view on this, we spoke with former Red Star Belgrade player Misha Radovic. He is a Yugoslav U-21 European champion and UEFA 'A' licensed coach. Now coaching in Indonesia with Pelita Jaya, he lived in Australia for 20 years until last year but kept in touch with many of his former team-mates and Serbian football.

He says there are a few players who could be special for the national team in the

THE COACH: VLADIMIR PETROVIC

Serbian coach Vladimir Petrovic might be a little familiar with the terrain in this country having coached China to a 1-0 win against the Qantas Socceroos in 2008. Yes, Australia played a largely experimental side but it was a win nonetheless.

Petrovic also visited here as a player many years ago with his club Red Star Belgrade. In 1977 they played against Australia (featuring Jack Reilly in goal) in Melbourne with the visitors coming away with an entertaining 3-2 victory.

"He was a fabulous player and he brings a bit of an old-fashioned attitude to coaching, based more or less on discipline," says Misha Radovic.

"He started his coaching career while still a player and, of course, I respect him And he's not going to change the tactics too much because it is in our nature to pass the ball in short passes and try play football.

"But the main thing is he doesn't have a player like a Piksi Stojkovic or a Dejan Savicevic as a playmaker who can decide a game."

DID YOU KNOW? Serbian striker Nikola Zigic stands 202cm tall. The Birmingham City beanpole is one of the tallest footballers in professional football.

Serb star Milos Krasic tries to round Mark Schwarzer at the 2010 FIFA World Cup

future, but stresses it's about bringing the professionalism from their clubs into the nat onal team

"I think Fiorentina's 19-year-old Adem Ljajic is a midfielder with great promise," he says of the former Partizan Belgrade player. "He was close to signing with Manchester United a few seasons ago, but went to Italy instead and is one of the leading players in Serie A.

> "Fiorentina's Adem Ljajic is now one of the leading players in Serie A"

"There's also Neven Subotic, a central defender who is 22 and a team-mate of Mitchell Langerak at Borussia Dortmund He's a good boy with talent and from what I hear he is being pursued by many big clubs - it's just a matter of which one he chooses.

"I also see Miralem Sulumani from Ajax as another with a bright future with Serbia's national team. He was subject to a massive transfer fee in Dutch football two or three

Vidic is a big reason for Man United's recent success

SERBIAN STARS

For a small country, Serbia has a big reputation for individual talent

Dejan Stankovic: Inter Milan
Team captain and Inter Milan star, Stankovic is a legend of the game and incredibly has represented Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro and Serbia at FIFA World Cups. Not only that, he's won a UEFA Champ ons League and Serie A title in recent years for the Nerazzurri. He has spent virtually his entire career in Italy after learning his trade at Red Star. They love him in Italy and some of his goals - particularly the audacious volley from the half-way line against Schalke in this season's UCL - have been memorable.

Nemanja Vidic: Manchester United
He's been a colossus at United since joining from Spartak Moscow some five years ago. Capped over 50 times for his nation, Vidic has formed a brilliant partnership at club level with Rio Ferdinand and has been called upon as club captain in his defensive partner's absence over the last two seasons. He learnt his football with the famous Red Star Belgrade and debuted for the national team nine years ago, aged 20.

Marko Pantelic: Olympiacos
The 32-year-old is still a brilliant striker. After a grounding at Red Star he made his name with over 100 appearances for Hertha Berlin, before his move to Ajax where he scored 16 times in 25 outings. Now in the Greek league he continues to fire home the goals. Debuted for the White Eagles in 2003.

Milos Krasic: Juventus
Qantas Socceroo Luke Wilkshire would've seen plenty of this blond, tricky winger in the Russian league when the Serbian was ripping it up for CSKA Moscow. Now in Italy with Juventus, where he's played 33 games this season and scored some memorable goals, the 26-year-old is at the peak of his career. As we saw from last year's FIFA World Cup, he's very difficult to contain when he starts dribbling at pace. He debuted for the White Eagles in 2006.

DID YOU KNOW?

Last time Serbia were surprisingly defeated by New Zealand 1-0, thanks to a Shane Smeltz goal in a FIFA World Cup warm-up game in Austria.

years ago and this 22-year-old is developing into a really good striker at an Ajax club known for it's quality."

So the question is: why do Serbia produce so many good players? It's something not even Radovic can quite explain.

"We are a nation of strong personalities and with that comes some flashes of character and ego. I think that is one of the reasons we produce such good players. It's a question that's not easy to answer when the results are not there.

"We have great players but when we play together for the national team, it's always like something disappears from our game," he says. "Vidic is an example. He has won lots of awards in the Premier League but in the national team can be prone to some unpredictable moments.

"But the younger players are playing at bigger clubs now and are bringing that professionalism and attitude to the national team. I can only hope that they [the national team] are going to have the same attitude as they do at Chelsea and Liverpool and Manchester United.

"I believe the majority of our players will stay for the next World Cup campaign," adds Radovic. "With these young players Serbia should be very strong and they are still hoping to qualify for the Euro championships next year."

Which brings us to the current challenge for Serbia: Euro 2012 qualifiers. Tonight's game is all part of preparations for the remainder of their qualifiers for the championships in Poland and Ukraine.

While some may say tonight's game is about revenge after the Qantas Socceroos defeated the Serbs 2-1 in Nelspruit a year ago, tonight's clash is also important in the context of qualification.

Italy look to have Group C sewn up, with Serbia and Slovenia in the chasing pack for second spot, although Serbia recently conceding a late goal away to group rivals Estonia, handing them a 1-1 draw, did not help their chances. Serbia's next game is away to Northern Ireland in September.

Unpredictability is both the Serbs best and worse asset - not even they seem to know

'PIKSI' THE GREAT

For those unaware, Serbia produced a modern-day gem of a player by the name of Dragan "Piksi" Stojkovic.

These days he's a coach in the J-League with Nagoya Grampus (Josh Kennedy's club) and as a player he was amazing.

'Piksi' even briefly played for Arsene Wenger, when the Arsenal boss was coaching in the J-League. Qantas Socceroo Alex Brosque and a number of Hyundai A-League players would've played against his side Nagoya Grampus in league games and in recent editions of the AFC Champions League.

But the Arsenal link doesn't stop there. Serbian national team coach Vladimir Petrovic played for the Gunners in the early '80s. The pair are considered two of the best produced by this nation.

which team will turn up on any given night. As Radovic said, the team seems to be a collection of talented professionals who haven't quite worked out how to turn all their individual talent into solid consistent team football.

This unpredictability is highlighted by the last two times Australia has played Serbia. The Qantas Socceroos handled the Serbs with relative ease a year ago in the FIFA World Cup in South Africa, but two years before, a more physical Serbia drew 1-1 with

> "The players need to have the same attitude for country as club"

the Qantas Olyroos at the Beijing Olympics.

With mystery in mind, who takes to the field tonight will be anyone's guess. Serbian coach Vladimir Petrovic could elect to give his highly-touted youngsters a run-out, or he could use the match to fine-tune his first XI ahead of the important qualifiers. Either way, the Qantas Socceroos will need to be on their game to keep the Europeans at bay for 90 minutes.

Whichever combination former Arsenal player and now Serbian coach Vladimir Petrovic picks, it'll please the eye. They'll no doubt make you smile with their individual style and flair.

"And these days," adds Radovic, "There is no such thing as a friendly." ■

Where were you when?

QANTAS SOCCEROO FAN Tommy Silver has golden memories of March in Germany

"I had arranged a ticket via Murray Shaw of Fox , who's a fellow Tottenham fan. I spent the afternoon with him, Andy Harper, Simon Hill and the technicians as we made our way to Mönchengladbach via the autobahn.

We arrived at the ground about two hours before kick-off so I killed time mingling with locals, including a German girl decked head-to-toe in Australia gear. She had fallen in love with Australia when she visited a few years and was an honorary Socceroo fan now. And my new German friend was overcome with excitement at the chance of seeing Harry Kewell, albeit at distance.

My seat was absolutely brilliant, just to the right of the Fox Sports commentary area, right on halfway With a fair bit of time before kick-off, I decided to get a bit German and bought some bratwurst and bier on what was quickly becoming a very cold night.

Unfortunately, there wasn't much for us to cheer about in the first half, but the roar when Mario Gomez scored for German was pretty impressive. I spent half-time discussing the game with 'Harps'. It was great to hear his thoughts on the match, straight after he had given them to those watching in Australia at 5am.

As we all know, the second half proved to be a much better for us. Two goals in three minutes provided cause to go wild in the stands. We sat through the next 30 minutes on the edge of our seats as the Germans got closer and closer. And Klose!

How he didn't score after Ognenovski slipped I will never know. Initially, it appeared as though the referee had blown for a penalty and there were some Germans around me celebrating. But once the yellow card was produced for simulation, there was a realisation that they might just be about to lose.

The sound of the final whistle was beautiful and the Aussie players looked genuinely happy. It was nice to see such passion from them, even in a friendly. It showed that they were hurting from the 4-0 defeat in South Africa and this went some way towards making amends.

It was amazing to be in Germany to see Australia win and the Fox Sports guys made it all the more special. Genuinely nice guys who made me feel very welcome

Overall, the trip was so worth it and I returned to London a very proud Aussie."

*Head to http://tommysilver.com.au/me/2011-football-tour/australia-in-germany/ for Tommy's blog ■

GREEN & GOLD RESURGENCE

The Westfield Matildas have this month's FIFA Women's World Cup in their sights, as the reigning AFC Women's Asian Cup champions aim high

WORDS Aidan Ormond PORTRAITS Mark Nolan

Group D of a glance

Drawn with Brazil, the Norwegians and little-known Equatorial Guinea if the Matildas can get through this group, they'll make the quarter finals for a second consecutive FIFA Women's World Cup. From that point on, who knows?

MATCHES

[redacted] group game one versus Brazil in Monchengladbach

[redacted] group game two versus Equatorial Guinea in Bochum

[redacted] group game three versus Norway in Leverkusen

THE WESTFIELD MATILDAS stunned many observers a year ago by winning the 2010 AFC Women's Asian Cup and now have another opportunity to add to their silverware haul when they kick-off their campaign for the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup in Germany this month.

How far our national team have come can be traced back to 2007 at the FIFA Women's World Cup in China, where the Aussie girls' adventure was heartbreakingly ended by Brazil in the quarter-finals.

That campaign signalled the end of an era with many of the team's most experienced stars retiring at the end of the tournament. Many speculated this current four-year cycle would be more of a rebuilding phase. How they were wrong

Aided by the launch of the Westfield W-League in 2008, an exciting wave of young, technically gifted starlets emerged. Inspired by the heroism of 2007, this younger generation have been knocking on the door of the national team, giving coach Tom Sermanni some genuine selection headaches.

Tick them off: Kyah Simon, [redacted], Dylon Allen, Caitlin Foord, Servet Uzunlar, Ellyse Perry, Elise Kellond-Knight, Leena Khamis, Emily Van Egmond, Laura Alleway, Tameka Butt, Casey Dumont. They've all emerged and are now pushing the more experienced core for green and gold starting spots.

In fact, the victorious 2010 AFC Women's Asian Cup final side etched

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their name in Aussie football history without two of their most experienced strikers in injured pair Lisa De Vanna and Sarah Walsh. Up stepped the likes of Simon – who scored the decisive shootout penalty against DPR Korea and Kerr, who opened the scoring for Australia in the final with a cool finish. These two starlets are now regulars.

Furthermore, the re-emergence of Sydney FC striker Catherine Cannuli has been a massive boost, with her goal against New Zealand in a friendly last month proving she can take her superb club form to the next level.

This is a hugely exciting squad and an equally exciting era is unfolding for the green and gold girls. Even with the untimely ACL injury to striker Kate Gill, Australia now have more depth in squad than ever before.

And they're going to need it.

At the FIFA Women's World Cup in Germany, the Westfield Matildas have been drawn in Group D with world power Brazil, the well-organised Norwegians and unknown Equatorial Guinea. The opening game on June 29 (local) against the South Americans will be vital. But if the 11th world ranked Australians can get through this tricky group, it's onto the quarter-finals and the sky's the limit.

That said, Westfield Matildas' keeper and captain Melissa Barbieri isn't underestimating the task at hand.

"Looking at the other groups we're definitely not in the group of death," says Barbieri. "But we are in one of the hardest.

Last time [at World Cup 2007] we played Norway, and Equatorial Guinea are unknown on the world stage, so we could dominate them. But Brazil is one of those tough ones..."

Of course, opening games in any group stage scenario are vital. We saw that with the Qantas Socceroos in the last two FIFA World Cups. Barbieri knows that by avoiding defeat it keeps Australia in contention ahead of the remaining

Depth the key for Westfield Matildas

The task of picking 18 outfield players has been the most difficult of Westfield Matildas coach Tom Sermanni's career. While the three goalkeepers – Barbieri, Casey Dumont and Lydia Williams – pick themselves, selecting the others has been more of a challenge.

But it's a good headache to have, even if deliberations on his final squad are set to feature numerous line-ball decisions.

"The final squad will be very difficult to choose," says Sermanni. "There are very few players who'd feel certain of their positions. So with that in mind, everybody feels a little on edge and tense."

Despite the tension, there's also a swagger about the group which the coach has picked up during the many recent training camps at the AIS, Central Coast and Gold Coast. He's hoping it continues to Germany, even if this squad is significantly less experienced than the 2007 side.

"They've got a real confidence, belief and ambition in themselves," reveals Sermanni.

Samantha Kerr
Position Striker

Thea Slatyer
Position Defender

The Socceroos style

There's been a surprising but very welcome revolution in Aussie women's football over the last four years. Many felt the Westfield Matildas were set for a period of building after the retirement of experienced heads like Cheryl Salisbury, Di Alagich and Joey Peters. But with the Westfield W-League kicking off in 2008 it's ushered in – perhaps quicker than most thought – a new era of players with technique and tactical awareness.

This was seen clearly a year ago when a youngish squad shocked many observers by not only making the semi-finals – thereby qualifying for the FIFA Women's World Cup – but actually lifting the trophy in a penalty shoot-out thriller against DPR Korea.

What stood out was the incredible coolness under pressure. Each of Australia's spot-kicks in that pressure cooker shoot out were dispatched with ease. It was emblematic of what Sermanni says is this squad's belief in their ability and strength of character.

It bodes well for the future. Now, with the FIFA Women's World Cup and a tough group stage ahead, it will be a measure of how far this new era of players has come.

We've come a very long way in four years. How far we'll soon find out.

two matches, and she feels Australia may have an advantage when they walk out on against Brazil in Monchengladbach. "That first game is critical so it's crucial we come out firing," the 31-year-old Melbourne Victory star says. "Brazil might not know that much about us or might not fear us because they've had wins against us in the past. Hopefully we can capitalise on that.

"Brazil play very fluently but I think we can dominate them in transition. Brazilians aren't renowned for their defensive nature so I think with our speed up front and our ability to transition from defence into attack, if we keep that mentality, we'll surprise them like we did at the last World Cup where got two quick goals."

If there's any truth in the saying that you learn more from your defeats than your wins, what can the Westfield Matildas learn from the defeat in 2007? As it turns out, it might be the Brazilians who'll have to do the studying on their opponent, according to Australia's captain.

"We're such a different team to last time [in 2007] and with such a larger base of players [to choose from]," explains Barbieri. "We're at that stage now where they're going to have to learn about us. And winning the AFC Asian Cup brings a lot of attention to us so I'm sure they'll do their homework.

"We've beaten them before 1-0 in the Peace Cup. So there's no reason why we can't do that again."

Four years ago, Westfield Matildas striker Kyah Simon watched the FIFA 2007 Women's World Cup on TV with friends. She was just 15, a rising star but still an unknown on the national scene. Four years later, she's one of the first names on the team sheet.

"It was a real adrenalin rush and [watching the game] made me feel like I wanted to be amongst it," recalls Simon, who'll turn 20 just four days before the clash with Brazil. "It's definitely a long way from me sitting in the lounge watching them four years ago."

Simon has quickly become a Westfield W-League superstar after sweeping the board at a glittering awards ceremony earlier this year, while her importance to the national team was underlined with a sizzling goal against New Zealand in May's preparatory friendly in Gosford.

"Playing a powerhouse team like Brazil will be life-changing," she says with a sense of excitement. "The main thing is preparation and we have to allow ourselves to get the best preparation – be it physically, mentally or just gelling as a team to give us the best chance we can against all three teams.

"Brazil is an amazing team but we still have to win our other games or at least get the right results to get to the quarter finals. That first game is always important but I think I can speak on behalf of all the girls by saying we want to go into every game hoping for a win.

"Anything's possible but if five points gets us through [the group] I'd be over the moon."

The group opener is set to offer players like Simon a chance to test their level against the very best in the world. Brazil feature some of the world's greatest footballers, including 25-year-old superstar striker Marta, the current Female World Player of the Year, an award she has won five times.

"I'll have to take a step back for a couple of seconds and let it sink in," Simon says, before adding, "Then go out and do my thing. Marta's Marta and the Matildas are the Matildas ... and Kyah's Kyah!" Perth Glory prodigy Sam Kerr – a game-changer in her own right – believes Simon is hitting form at just the right time to make a mark on the tournament.

"Kyah, she's had an amazing season in the Westfield W-League and she's taken that form into camp," says Kerr. "She's killing it in training.. it's an exciting team and a new team, this Matildas ... but also scary. It's hard to make the starting XI. It's good to have depth but also scary for players like myself.

"We're not one of the big name teams but you never know how far we can go." ■

Melissa Barbieri
Position Goalkeeper

Cover girls

For the first time in FourFourTwo magazine history anywhere in the world, a female footballer graces the front cover this month. Pele, Maradona, Cantona, Beckham... now Kerr, Barbieri and Simon.

"I used to think being in the same magazine as ones with Beckham on the front cover was pretty special. Now I'm on the front cover," says Barbieri with a laugh.

"Hopefully you're average Joe might just pick this up. And maybe a few female readers will start on the FourFourTwo bandwagon."

"To sport our new kit on the front cover of FourFourTwo, it doesn't get any better than that," adds Slatyer. Likewise, Simon was well proud when told the news. "It's amazing women's football is starting to get recognised and it couldn't be better than on a worldwide football magazine like FourFourTwo."

The July issue is out now.

THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS

After impressing in Asia, an exciting Qantas Young Socceroo squad are ready for next month's FIFA U-20 World Cup WORDS Aidan Ormond

JUST AS THE WESTFIELD MATILDAS have undergone a renaissance in the last few years, so too have the Qantas Young Socceroos. And if you want evidence, cast your mind back to last October in China.

At the AFC U-19 Championships in China, the Qantas Young Socceroos banged in 15 goals in six matches, topping a difficult group featuring regional heavyweights Korea Republic and Iran, before accounting for United Arab Emirates in the quarter-final to confirm qualification for Colombia.

> "The manner in which the Qantas Young Socceroos played caused much excitement"

But it didn't end there. An eye-catching 2-0 semi-final win against Saudi Arabia earned the Aussies a spot in the final, where a last-gasp goal by DPR Korea denied the young Aussies glory in a 3-2 thriller.

However, the manner in which the Qantas Young Socceroos played – constantly attacking, technically adept and sparked by standout individual performances – caused much excitement for the future.

Looking ahead to the FIFA U-20 World Cup, played July 29 to August 20 in Colombia, the Qantas Young Socceroos have been drawn in Group C, alongside Ecuador, Costa Rica and Spain. Clearly it's no easy task, as Qantas Young Socceroo coach Jan Versleijen concedes.

"It's always said that there are no easy matches at a World Cup and from looking at our group this is definitely true," says

FIFA U-20 WORLD CUP 2011 GROUPS

- Group A (Bogota/Cali)
- Group B (Cali/Bogota)
- Group C (Manizales/Pereira)
- Group D (Armenia/Pereira)
- Group E (Barranquilla/Cartagena)
- Group F (Medellin/Cartagena)

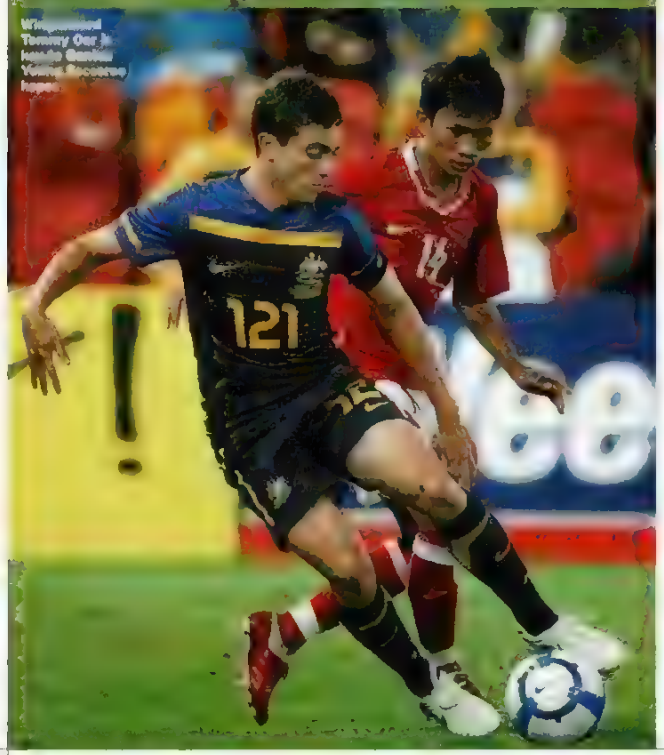
GROUP OPPONENTS

SPAIN
This is the squad that won the 2008 UEFA U-17 Euro Championships after walloping France 4-0. In qualification for Colombia, Luis Milla's side rightfully went into last year's U-19 Euro Championships in France confident. Victories over Croatia, Portugal and Italy gave them top spot in their section and a place in the semi-finals against England, who they duly dispatched 3-1 to set up another final against France. But the free-scoring French had revenge on their minds after the loss two years earlier and they defeated their Iberian neighbours 2-1.

ECUADOR
A dark horse in the group, 'La Tri-color' will feel at home in the Colombian conditions, though this is their first appearance at a FIFA U-20 World Cup since 2001. Coach Sixto Vizuete's side just edged it in qualification, courtesy of a 1-0 victory over Chile on the final day of the six-team round of matches in Peru. With a strong defensive record – the best of all teams in the Peru tournament – Vizuete hopes to build his team around it's strengths at the back.

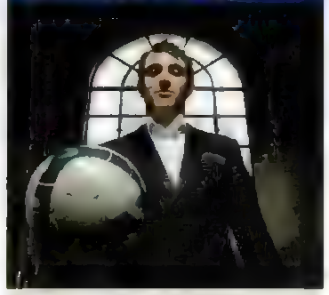
COSTA RICA
After losing to Costa Rica 3-0 in the 2009 FIFA U-20 World Cup in Egypt, the Qantas Young Socceroos should know what to expect from them as a team. And that team impressed massively, taking out third place after losing to Brazil in the semi-finals. In CONCACAF qualifiers for 2011, Costa Rica scored 15 times as Ronald Gonzalez's team looked impressive before losing 3-1 to Mexico in the final

Playmaker Mustafa Amini is set to steal the show in Colombia



Wingwizard Tommy Oar is hoping Qantas Young Socceroos hopes

QANTAS YOUNG SOCCEROO STARS



THE CAPTAIN

Ben Kantarovski (above) leads the team from central midfield and is expected to be fit after suffering a knee injury in training last December

The Newcastle Jet has been playing Hyundai A-League football regularly over recent seasons and has been linked with a move to Bayern Munich in recent times, such is the buzz surrounding him.

The 19-year-old is one of the most influential players in the squad and comes with a vast array of experience, making his A-League debut as a 16-year-old.

THE PLAYMAKER

Mustafa Amini (left, above) has been arguably the most impressive youngster in Australian football over the last 12 months. He caught the eye last October as one of the key players in the Qantas Young Socceroos' AFC U-19 success.

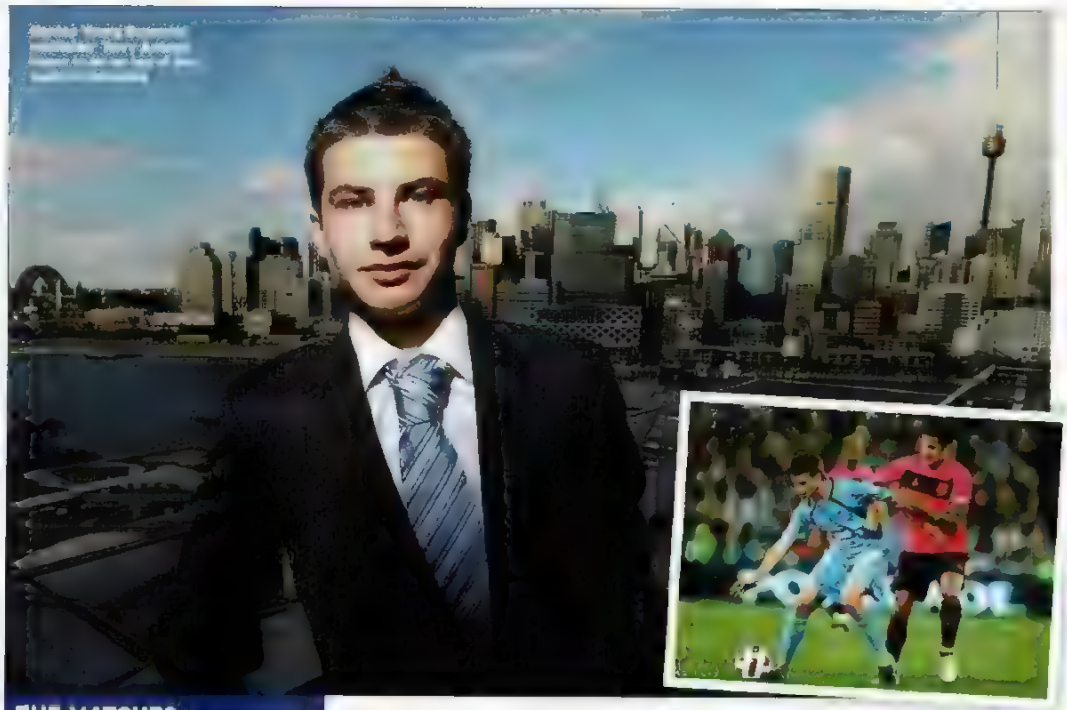
His performances in China propelled the charismatic 18-year-old into the Central Coast Mariners first team. Amini went on to start in this year's Hyundai A-League Grand Final.

'Musti' has vision, touch and technique and also bears a striking resemblance to Colombian legend Carlos Valderrama, which should make him an instant hit with the locals.

THE WING WIZARD

Lightning quick Tommy Oar (left) is one Australian player to have already experienced the FIFA U-20 World Cup back in 2009. Since then he's had call-ups to the national team and played at Anfield with his Dutch club FC Utrecht in a Europa League tie. Not bad for a 19-year-old

It was Oar's work down the flanks with fellow wing wizard Matt Leckie that caused so much damage in China last October and you sense the former Brisbane Roar starlet is an even better player now.



THE MATCHES

The Qantas Young Socceroos will play their first match against Ecuador on Sunday July 31, then face Costa Rica on Wednesday August 3, before their final group match against Spain on Saturday August 6.

Tickets have been selling extremely well in Colombia with big crowds expected for this showpiece event.

Versleijen. "We played Costa Rica at the last World Cup in Egypt so we are familiar with their style of play. Spain is one of the strongest teams in Europe and they are famous for their youth development, so we are expecting them to be very tough

"Ecuador is the unknown quantity within the group, so we will have to be on our game playing them in a climate they are accustomed to."

Ever since Australia qualified, preparations have been methodical Versleijen's squad has been in camp several times over recent months, together with the Qantas Olyroos, who themselves are preparing for London 2012 Olympic Games qualifiers under coach Aurelio Vidmar.

This month the Qantas Young Socceroos head to the prestigious Terborg Tournament in Holland, playing teams such as Holland's Ajax, Brazil's Botafogo and Mexico's Atlas Guadalajara. Then the squad will travel to the USA in mid-July for a pre-tournament camp in Denver, Colorado before moving to their base camp in the Colombian city of Manizales, situated 2300m above sea-level, for the first phase of the tournament.

"The altitude will also be a major factor at this tournament, so we will need to plan our physical and tactical preparation accordingly," explains Versleijen, who has coached at club level in the Netherlands, Japan, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, as well as the Dutch U-17 and U-23 teams.

So, with the altitude and the quality of opposition, there's little doubt the Colombian assignment will be tricky. But for the Australians one advantage might be experience. At the 2009 FIFA U-20 World Cup in Egypt, the Qantas Young Socceroos featured a number of younger players who are likely to wear the green and gold in Colombia – a big plus in a tournament with such a high turnover of players. Additionally, a number of the current crop are regulars in the Hyundai A-League, with many of

> "Our target is to progress past the group phase – then anything is possible"

youngsters benefitting from three years under Versleijen's tutelage and in an elite development structure.

The Qantas Young Socceroos have a fine history in this tournament. At the 1993 edition, hosted by Australia, a Kevin Muscat-led side reached the semis. Two years earlier they'd reached the last four in Portugal, with the likes of Paul Okon and Mark Bosnich starring. In 1995, Mark Viduka scored four of Australia's five group stage goals. Little wonder Versleijen is eager to write a glorious new chapter in Qantas Young Socceroo history.

"The players and staff are getting excited about the prospect of playing against the best in the world," he says. "Competition for places is getting tougher. Our target will be to progress beyond the group phase and from there anything is possible." ■

Future looks bright with this duo

Meet two young players who can be future regular Qantas Socceroos

WORDS Aidan Ormond

Mitchell Langerak

Age: 22
Club: Borussia Dortmund
Position: Goalkeeper
Socceroos: Qantas Young Socceroos, Qantas Socceroos
Clubs: Melbourne Victory, Bundaberg Waves, Tien Tigers, AIS

The Dortmund shot-stopper caught the eye in his first season in the Bundesliga

It's not often an Australian player under the age of 25 can say he won a major European title in his first season abroad, but that's the story of Mitchell Langerak's sensational 12 months at Borussia Dortmund.

Initially bought in to provide cover and learn the ropes behind first-choice keeper Roman Weidenfeller, Langerak was thrust front and centre in the week leading up to a crucial game against Bayern Munich. Weidenfeller went down with a knee injury in training and coach Juergen Klopp called on the Queensland-born custodian to step into the breach. Dortmund were top of the Bundesliga table but they hadn't beaten Bayern at their place for 19 years.

Nerves? Nah, the 22-year-old former Qantas Young Socceroo ripped it up on debut and was one of the stars in an eye-catching 3-1 win.

Klopp told bvb.de after the game: "Mitch protected the lead for us and, all things told, he controlled everything terrifically."

Even his team-mates were eager to talk up their new Aussie glovesman, with midfielder Sven Bender telling Die Welt: "He's an outstanding goalkeeper who deserves this opportunity."

And take the opportunity he did in a crucial win cementing Borussia's spot at the top and helped them on their way to their first title since 2001-02.

At international level, Langerak's performances and attitude has also paid off. He was called into Qantas Socceroo coach Holger Osieck's squad when Australia were in Germany to play – and beat – 'Die Mannschaft' 2-1 in a friendly in March. And he's back this month for the Serbia and New Zealand games.

Coincidentally, the current undisputed Qantas Socceroo number one Mark Schwarzer also played much of his early European career in Germany. And both keepers have similar attributes – physically imposing, great in one-on-ones and dominant around their penalty area.

"Dortmund has a big name, a big tradition. The fact that this team wanted to have me was like a present for me," said Langerak.

The future looks bright for the Qantas Socceroo keeping ranks with Langerak now in the mix for future appearances in the green and gold. And for 'Die Borussen'

Mustafa Amini

Age: 18
Club: Central Coast Mariners
Position: Playmaker
Socceroos: Qantas Young Socceroos
Clubs: Blacktown City, AIS

It's been a breakthrough 12 months for the instantly recognisable Qantas Young Socceroo playmaker

One of the feel-good stories over the last year has been the rise of Mustafa Amini, the charismatic, skilful and big-haired playmaker from the Central Coast. At just 17 years old, he has lit up the Hyundai A-League with the Mariners, while emerging as a key figure in the success of the FIFA U-20 World Cup-bound Qantas Young Socceroos.

Last October's AFC U-19 Championships in China were Australia's chance to shine on the continental stage and for the final four nations, there was the added bonus of a spot in Colombia at the FIFA U-20 World Cup at stake.

The Qantas Young Socceroos did shine with Amini influential for coach Jan Versleijen's team, pulling the strings for a potent Aussie strike-force and chiming in with two wonderful efforts himself against UAE and Iran.

"Tommy Oar on the left, Matthew Leckie on the right and Kantarovski and Grant behind, with Matthew Fletcher in front," says Amini. "Just having those players around you, having the confidence to play with them and them having the confidence in you is great.

"Jan [Versleijen] is a great coach. You can just tell he's a different coach to others from his training sessions and tactical stuff. How he wants his ball-speed quicker, it's how it is in Europe."

Young Amini's resurgence didn't stop in China, with the teen soon selected for the Central Coast first team upon his return from securing a place in Colombia for Australia.

His maiden Hyundai A-League goal soon came and he ended the season making over 20 appearances for the yellow and blue, capping off the year as a starting XI player in that unforgettable finale against Brisbane Roar.

Not bad for someone still just 17.

"I went into pre-season with the Mariners and I was like, 'What am I doing here? I should be back with at the AIS with my boys'," recalls the west Sydney-born youngster. "But then I got stronger and faster and the ball just came to me and I got used to it.

Now, Amini is indispensable and, if still at the club next season, appears to have a firm grip on the playmaker role.

Meantime, the small matter of a FIFA U-20 World Cup in Colombia is next as Amini aims to further boost his growing reputation (just visit his growing Facebook page to see how popular Musty is!).

All of which is good news for red afro wig-sellers all around Gosford.

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SHOOT SCORE

Test your friends or quietly exercise your grey matter. No prizes, just a bit of fun!

1. Name the Qantas Socceroo scorers in the 2-1 victory over Germany earlier this year?
2. What was the result of the friendly between New Zealand and the Qantas Socceroos at the MCG in May 2010?
3. When was the last time the Qantas Socceroos played in Adelaide?
4. What hockey does 22-year-old Qantas Socceroo Matt Spiranovic play for?
5. Who scored the Qantas Socceroos' second goal in their 6-0 semi-final win over Uzbekistan at the 2011 AFC Asian Cup?
6. In which Australian state was Qantas Young Socceroo Matthew Jurman born?
7. How old is Qantas Socceroo Carl Valeri?
8. Who did Qantas Socceroo legend John Aloisi come on for against Japan in the 75th minute of the opening group game at the 2006 FIFA World Cup?
9. Who did Robbie Kruse replace as a substitute in the final of the 2011 AFC Asian Cup last January?
10. Name the English club where Qantas Socceroo keeper Mark Schwarzer spent almost a decade?
11. How many Qantas Socceroo caps were earned by retired Qantas Socceroo midfielder Joe Skoko?
12. How many times did Kevin Muscat play for the Qantas Socceroos?
13. Where will the Westfield Matildas play first in their group at this month's FIFA Women's World Cup?
14. Who scored the winning shootout penalty for the Westfield Matildas at the 2010 AFC Asian Cup final?
15. In what year did Qantas Socceroo coach Holger Osieck win the FIFA World Cup as an assistant coach for Germany?

ANSWERS: 1 Luke Wilkshire and David Carney 2 2-1 to Australia 3 2004 4 Ice Hockey 5 Sasa Ognenovski 6 Victoria 7 26 8 Luke Wilkshire 9 Harry Kewell 10 Manchester United 11 51 12 51 13 Brazil 14 Kosta Barbarouses 15 1990

Australian Government
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Australian Sports Commission

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- they are participating in a national school sport championship, endorsed by School Sport Australia
- their application is supported by the relevant state or national sporting organisation, or state or national school sport organisation.

The Elite Indigenous Travel and Accommodation Assistance Program (EITAAP) is jointly managed by the Australian Sports Commission and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Visit asupport.gov.au/eitaap for more information.

VICTORIAN SOCCEROO TRIBUTE

We look at two retiring Victorians who have graced the game for both club and country

WORDS Aidan Ormond

VICTORIANS HAVE ALWAYS HAD A STRONG PRESENCE in the national team and two of the most recognised and lauded have been Kevin Muscat and Josip Skoko. How can we forget what this pair have done for the green and gold?

Muscat captained Australia in the 1993 FIFA World Youth Championships and played his part in a famous semi-final against Brazil at the old Olympic Park.

Eight years later, he was front and centre again, this time for the Qantas Socceroos as he coolly slotted home the penalty which gave Australia a crucial 1-0 home win over Uruguay at the MCG in a FIFA World Cup qualifier.

As for Skoko, Qantas Socceroo fans are still talking about his stunning long-range goal at the MCG against the reigning European champions Greece in 2006.

A cracker of a shot that handed the green and gold a 1-0 win in their last game before returning to the FIFA World Cup after a 32 year exodus. It was every bit as good as his long range beauty against Mexico at the 2001 FIFA Confederations Cup.

As this season sees both men retire from the game, we take a look back at their great careers in the green and gold. ■

Kevin Muscat

Age 37
Socceroo appearances 51
Goals 10
Socceroo debut vs Kuwait, 1994
Other national honours U-20, U-23
Clubs Sunshine George Cross, Heidelberg United, South Melbourne, Crystal Palace, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Rangers, Millwall, Melbourne Victory
Current Position Melbourne Victory Assistant Coach

Super Kev in action for the green and gold

Tough-tackling, no-nonsense Kevin Muscat epitomised the 'love him on your side, hate him on the other' attitude that many uncompromising players elicit from fans.

It was only in the green and gold that Muscat could be appreciated by all of Australia and, in over 51 dedicated appearances, he repaid that faith.

Back in September 1994 the ball-playing defender, and sometime midfielder, started his international career by coming on as a 67th minute substitute in a 0-0 draw with Kuwait in Kuala Lumpur.

The following decade of his Qantas Socceroos career was defined by three FIFA Confederations Cups, between 1997 and 2005, even being handed the captain's armband for a brief spell in 2001.

Muscat's first game as captain was the standard drubbing of a Pacific Island nation – beating Tonga 22-0 – where he celebrated his new leadership status with four goals, including a hat-trick from the penalty spot!

Later that year, with Paul Okon now sporting the armband, Muscat scored the only goal of the game in the first leg of the 2002 FIFA World Cup qualification play-off against Uruguay in Melbourne, again from the penalty spot. Unfortunately, a 3-0 reverse in Montevideo robbed Muscat of the chance of a FIFA World Cup appearance.

When the Hiddink revolution swept through the Qantas Socceroos side ahead of qualifying for the 2006 FIFA World Cup, there was no place for Muscat in the qualifiers or tournament in Germany. Later that year Muscat did get an international swansong of sorts, as Graham Arnold made Muscat his captain for the AFC Asian Cup qualifier against Kuwait, the nation he faced on debut some 12 years prior. Despite making an A-League-sourced squad for 2010 FIFA World Cup qualification, he never graced the field in the green and gold again.

Muscat knew only one way to play and that bullish approach duly flowed into his international career. The infamous tackle from behind on France's Christophe Dugarry in 2001 – branded by then-France coach Roger Lemerre as "an act of brutality" – was in the wake of being spat at by Arsenal's France star Robert Pires. Muscat's tackle sparked a mid-pitch ruckus, before Muscat was booked and quickly subbed by Australia coach Frank Farina.

Since Muscat's retirement, calls have been made for his involvement in the local game at a coaching level. Qantas Socceroo captain Lucas Neill believes Muscat's experience needs to be leveraged from the touchline. "Kevin has taken a lot of stick for [certain incidents] but I'm sure the blokes who have played under him at Melbourne would say he's been a great captain and leader who taught them a lot," said Neill. "He offers a lot through his many, many experiences."

With players now thinking it is safe to go back on the pitch, they might now have to deal with the tenacious Muscat, who has been gaining his coaching licenses, on the touchline in the future. We sincerely hope so.

Josip Skoko

Age 35
Socceroo appearances 51
Goals 9
Socceroo debut vs Macedonia, 1997
Other national honours U-20, U-23
Clubs North Geelong Warriors, Hajduk Split, Genk, Gençlerbirliği, Wigan Athletic, Stoke City, Hajduk Split, Melbourne Heart

Scoring 'that' goal against Greece
Bossing the midfield in a pre FIFA World Cup 2006 friendly match

A decade in the Qantas Socceroos' set-up enabled Josip Skoko to become a regular contributor and fans' favourite.

Throughout a nomadic overseas career, the midfield gem remained dedicated to the green and gold at a time when such commitments were often frowned upon by European club managers.

'Skokes' kicked off his international career in 1997 in Macedonia, when national coach Terry Venables bought him on for Steve Corica, before a last gasp Aurelio Vidmar goal gave the visitors a 1-0 win.

The stocky creator soon became a mainstay of the Qantas Socceroos, participating in two FIFA World Cup qualification campaigns – the heartbreaking loss against Uruguay in 2001 and then the glorious revenge over 'La Celeste' in 2005 – as well as playing in the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

Though he could not stop the poor results, with defeats in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide as Australia finished bottom of their group, Skoko can still take pride in becoming an Olympian in his own backyard.

Following that, 2004 turned into the most fruitful year for Skoko in front of goal in a Qantas Socceroos jersey, as he notched four goals in 10 appearances, including one at Craven Cottage in London against a strong Norway side in a 2-2 encounter.

However, when it comes to memorable goals, nothing will eclipse May 25, 2006. With over 93,000 people at MCG for Australia's FIFA World Cup farewell game against Greece, the only goal of the game came from an edge-of-the-box Skoko screamer.

With just 15 minutes on the clock, Mark Bresciano looped in a high corner from the left. After two flicked headers back across the box, the ball fell to Skoko who let it bounce once before firing a blistering half-volley into the top corner of the Greek goal. It was a fitting way to send Australia to its first World Cup in 32 years and something Skoko regards as "the most legendary moment of all-time".

Skoko then travelled to Germany as part of the Socceroos' 23-man squad, but did not make an appearance as his nation shocked the world by making the knock-out stages. He did get compensated later that year as he captained Australia in an AFC Asian Cup qualifier against Bahrain.

In September 2007, the friendly against former FIFA World Cup-winner Argentina brought the curtain down on Skoko's international career, as the visitors squeezed past Australia 1-0. Claiming his 51st and final cap, on the 51st minute Skoko was replaced by Carl Valeri. Over 70,000 people rose and applauded a dedicated Qantas Socceroo servant who would be sorely missed.

SOCCEROO THROUGH AND THROUGH...

Socceroo Sisterhood (Jess is on the left)

Aloisi's goal... tops with Jess

Jess Martin

One of a family of four girls Jess is football - and Socceroo - crazy

How long have you been a Roo fan?
My first game was in 1993 at the SFS when the Socceroos played Canada in the home leg of World Cup qualifying for USA '94. I went with my Dad and I remember thinking, "This is awesome!". The match went to extra-time and a penalty shoot-out where Mark Schwarzer saved the day!

What got you into football?
My Dad is the proud father of four daughters and he's played football all his life. There was never going to be netball or dancing, so it was always football from the start and it's been that way ever since. I started playing when I was six when not many other girls were playing 'The Beautiful Game' and I haven't stopped.

What is it about the green and gold that fires your football passion?
Football is the underdog of sporting codes. To see where Australian football has come from, its history and the potential of the game in this country and overseas excites me. I can't wait for the day when the Socceroos win their first major trophy playing their own style of football.

What do you feel when the national anthem is played?
It always gives me goose-bumps. It's one of my favourite parts of any match.

Tell us about the camaraderie with other Socceroo fans?
If you've been supporting the Socceroos for a long time you know what it's like. There have been major highs (think Nov 16, 2005) and monumental lows (Iran in 1997) and it's that feeling and those memories that bond Socceroos fans together. It's like a secret handshake that everyone knows without actually ever saying anything.

Favouritie Socceroo moment, and why?
Johnny Aloisi when he slotted home that penalty. Every Socceroos fan experienced the ride of their lives that night; grown men crying, people hugging. Non-football fans recall it as one of the most amazing moments in sporting history and to this day, it still brings a tear to my eye.

Best away trip?
When the Socceroos played Japan at the MCG in a World Cup qualifier in 2009. It was freezing cold and a Cahill brace saw Australia finish top of their group. It was a great occasion, a massive crowd and the two teams were still playing for something.

Favourite stadium where you've seen the Socceroos play?
Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane.

Favourite Socceroo and why?
It's a toss-up between Harry Kewell and John Aloisi. I fell in love with Harry (he's an absolute spunk!) in 1997 against Iran and have loved him ever since. But John gave me my favourite Socceroo memory and scored the winner for Sydney FC when we won the Premiership in 2009-10.

Holger: your thoughts?
He gave Matt Mackay and Robbie Kruse a run over more more established names. In Holger we trust. ■

JESS AT A GLANCE

Team you play for?	Balmain Districts FC, Sydney
Hyundai A-League side?	Sydney FC
Occupation	Website and Content Manager

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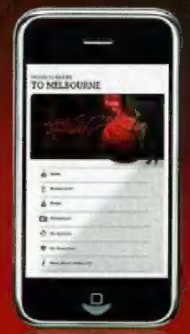

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NUMBER CRUNCH

All the numbers you need to know about Australia's opponent Serbia

7,319,712 Population of Serbia

2 Number of goals scored by Serbia at the 2010 FIFA World Cup

132,182 Number of registered players

16 Current FIFA World Ranking

Number of registered clubs **296**

2,656 Highest point of country in metres

5 Years since Nemanja Vidic joined Man United

16 Number of teams in the Jelen SuperLiga (Serbia's top division)

29 **Age of star defender Nemanja Vidic**

202 Number of centimetres striker Nikola Zigic stands

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